



YOUTH MINISTRY/CONFIRMATION
Handbook and Calendar
2013 - 2014

ST. RITA OF CASCIA PARISH
A Catholic Faith Community Since 1908

**ST. RITA OF CASCIA PARISH
YOUTH MINISTRY/CONFIRMATION PROGRAM**

50 East Alegria Avenue, Sierra Madre, CA 91024

DIRECTOR OF YOUTH MINISTRY/CONFIRMATION

Theresa Bui Costanzo, Email: ym@st-rita.org / Tel: (626) 590-8828

YOUTH MINISTRY TEAM

In order to have a vibrant youth ministry that meets the personal, social and spiritual needs of over 100 youth, The Director of Youth Ministry leads a youth ministry team comprised of adult volunteers and confirmed teen volunteers who serve as “peer leaders.” The Director is responsible for inviting interested parishioners to join the youth ministry team, providing the team with valuable youth ministry resources, and offering faith formation and leadership training for all team members. Faith formation opportunities include the following:

For adult catechists:

- Workshops at the Los Angeles Religious Education Congress and/or San Gabriel Regional Congress
- Basic Ministry Formation through the Los Angeles Archdiocese
- Confirmation Specialization and/or Youth Ministry Specialization
- Retreat(s)
- Virtus Safety Training for Adults

For peer leaders:

- Summer leadership development retreats/trainings for confirmed youth
- All-day training/orientation for new peer leaders at St. Rita
- Workshops for teen leaders at the San Gabriel Regional Congress
- Youth Day at Religious Education Congress

TEAM MEMBERS

Adult Leaders:

- Stephen Bollman, Rick Brockmann (Edge), Kathy Hagen, Kathy Kigerl, Linda McDaniels, Peter O’Connor, and Kevin Slattery (Edge)

Peer Leaders:

- Ryan Adams, Reece Aguilar, Gregory Alle, Alexis Arrelanes, Kayla Beaumont, Andrea Hurtado, William Hurtado, Casey McAlary, Roberto Merrell, Colleen Mispagel, Erin Natale, Nadia Vallado, and Ryan Wurmsdobler.

Youth Ministry Team

September 2013

Dear parents,

Welcome to the Youth Ministry at St. Rita Parish. The Youth Ministry serves youth in middle school (6th—8th grades) and senior high school (9th—12th grades) through the following sub-ministries:

- **“Edge” Middle School Ministry** is available for all middle school youth in the parish:
 - **Edge Fellowship** is a monthly youth ministry gathering for ALL 6th—8th graders.
 - **Edge Sessions** provide faith formation (a.k.a. religious education) for middle school students who don’t attend Catholic school. Edge sessions take place every Monday at 4 p.m. (except on holidays & Edge Fellowship days).
- **High School Youth Ministry** is available for all high school youth, regardless of where they are in their faith journey. They may be in the Confirmation program, already confirmed, or even non-Catholic friends of Catholic teens in the parish.
- **Confirmation Preparation Program** is a two-year process for 9th and 10th grade teens preparing to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation. For our youth, this is a special period of discernment and apprenticeship in lay ministry. We are very excited to journey with our young Confirmation candidates and their families.
- **Peer Leadership** is an opportunity for confirmed teens to develop their leadership skills and serve as peer leaders in the youth ministry/Confirmation preparation program.

We support all parents as their children’s primary catechists (teachers of the Catholic faith). Hence, we encourage you to be especially faithful in attending Mass on Sundays, praying together as a family, and sharing faith stories with one another. This is also a great opportunity for you to seek further spiritual growth besides attending Mass (Bible study groups, prayer groups, retreats, Religious Education Congress, etc.). In addition, you and your family have the opportunity to give your time, talent, and/or treasure to serve in the various ministries in our parish. It is your living out your faith that will have the greatest impact on the faith life of your children. The youth ministry welcomes your help and support. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at ym@st-rita.org.

Peace in Christ,

Theresa Bui Costanzo
Director of Youth Ministry



Welcome

EDGE Middle School Ministry

Goals of Edge Ministry:

- To Foster a transforming spiritual experience of Jesus through the liturgy, which will allow early adolescents to experience the Word of God and the Eucharist in a deeper and more profound way.
- To create a positive experience of the Catholic Church for early adolescents.
- To assist middle school youngsters in gaining an understanding and appreciation of what the Catholic Church teaches and believes.
- To incorporate the Catholic Church's vision of social justice and peace into the spiritual life of pre-adolescents.
- To develop an identity in middle school youth and in the Edge ministry as being a vital and visual presence within the parish community.

Edge Registration for 2013-2014 takes place from July 20 to September 16, 2013 (First day of Edge Session).

Edge Sessions provide catechesis (a.k.a. Religious Education) for non-Catholic school 6th to 8th graders. Edge sessions take place on Mondays, 4:00 – 5:15 p.m. in Msgr. Gara Hall, starting on September 16, 2013. There will be no Edge session on the following dates: 11/11/13, 12/23/13, 12/30/13, 1/20/14, 2/17/14, 4/14/14, and 4/21/14. The last day of Edge session is May 19, 2014.

Edge Fellowships are monthly youth ministry gatherings for ALL middle school youth, including those attending St. Rita's School. Edge Fellowships take place on the first Monday of each month, 4:00 pm – 5:15 pm in Msgr. O'Malley Hall. The first Edge Fellowship will be on October 7, 2013. The last day of Edge Fellowship is on May 5, 2014.

Lenten Living Stations of the Cross and Soup Kitchen – During Lent, Edger participants will present the Living Stations of the Cross for parishioners, followed by a community “soup kitchen” supper in Msgr. Gara Hall on March 21, 2014. The money collected at the soup kitchen will be donated to St. Francis Center. All Edge families are invited.

Eighth Grade Retreat – there will be an all-day retreat for Edge eighth grade students on Friday, May 30, 2014. Participants will need to request to be excused from school “for a religious retreat”.

High School Youth Ministry

The Youth Ministry aims to implement the three essential goals identified in the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB)'s visionary document entitled *Renewing the Vision: A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry*:

1. Empower young people to live as disciples of Jesus Christ in our world today;
2. Draw young people to responsible participation in the life, mission, and work of the faith community;
3. Foster the personal and spiritual growth of each young person.

YOUTH MINISTRY ACTIVITIES/EVENTS (COUNT FOR PARISH PARTICIPATION)

St. Rita Youth Ministry provides various social, spiritual and/or service activities for all high school teens to experience God's amazing love in a fun and safe environment. They include the following:

- Youth Mass (1st and 2nd Saturdays at 5:30 p.m.)
- Youth "Nites" (2nd and 4th Wednesdays, 7:00 – 8:30 p.m. in Msgr. Gara Hall.)
- Life Teen's "Inspiration" youth rally and Mass at Magic Mountain (November 2, 2013)
- Parish Penance Service (Advent 2013)
- Youth Rally for Life at the Los Angeles Cathedral (January 18, 2014)
- Goodwill Fundraiser (March 25, 2014)
- Youth Day at Los Angeles Religious Education Congress (March 13, 2014)
- Live Stations of the Cross (March 21, 2014)
- Good Friday Service and Stations of the Cross at Mater Dolorosa Retreat Center (April 18, 2014)
- Life Teen's Mass on the Beach (August 2014)

SERVICE PROJECTS

We offer the teens an opportunity to learn about the Catholic social teaching and opportunities to serve those in need in the larger community through the following service projects:

- Help prepare and serve breakfast to the homeless at Union Station Homeless Services (1st Sunday of every month)
- Help prepare and serve lunch to the homeless at St. Francis Center (3rd Saturday of every month)
- Accompany blind members of the Climb Community at Mass twice a year
- Participate in the parish's "Adopt-a-Family" program during Advent
- Serve at the Foothill Unity Center's Food Drives
- Collect canned goods at the parish for low income families at St. Anthony parish in San Gabriel

Confirmation Program Overview

“Preparation for Confirmation should aim at leading the Christian toward a more intimate union with Christ and a more lively familiarity with the Holy Spirit – his actions, his gifts, and his biddings – in order to be more capable of assuming the apostolic responsibilities of Christian life. To this end, catechesis for Confirmation should strive to awaken a sense of belonging to the Church of Jesus Christ, the universal Church as well as the parish community. The latter bears special responsibility for the preparation of confirmands.” (Catechism of the Catholic Church #1309)

The Goal of St. Rita’s Confirmation Preparation Program is to form disciples by leading teens to:

- ◆ Develop a personal relationship with **Jesus Christ**,
- ◆ Experience the power of the **Holy Spirit**,
- ◆ Awaken a sense of belonging to the **Church**.

Effective Confirmation Preparation

- ◆ **Emphasizes what God is doing in our lives**
(NOT what we do to be worthy or deserving)
- ◆ **Works within youth ministry and faith formation**
(NOT as a separate or competing program)
- ◆ **Focuses on preparation for celebrating the sacrament**
(NOT as a place for all of the needed adolescent catechesis)
- ◆ **Involves the community of faith**
(NOT anonymous preparation program)
- ◆ **Works in partnership with parents and sponsors**
(NOT in competition for family time/attention)
- ◆ **Launches youth toward full participation and active discipleship**
(NOT as an end but a beginning)

Source: Confirming Disciples, Center for Ministry Development

Confirmation Program Requirements 2013 - 2014

1. Eligibility

In the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, Confirmation preparation is a two-year process for high school teens, starting in freshman year of high school. Candidates need to have received the sacraments of Baptism, First Eucharist and First Reconciliation.

2. Registration

The registration period is from June 1 to September 21, 2013. Registration paperwork includes the following:

- Registration Form
- Health and Medical Release Form
- Confirmation Sponsor Form
- Virtus “Teaching Touching Safety Training” Permission Slip
- A copy of the Baptismal Certificate
- A copy of the First Communion Certificate
- Registration fee payment (Fee may be deferred or waived for families who need financial assistance.)

3. Mass Attendance on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation

The Mass is the source and summit of our Catholic Faith. All candidates and their families are expected to attend Mass every Sunday (or Saturday evening) and on holy days of obligation, which include All Saints Day (11/1), Immaculate Conception (12/8), Christmas (12/25) and Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary (8/15). The Youth Mass follows every Confirmation Session on Saturdays at 5:30 p.m. It is specifically designed to encourage full and active participation of middle school and high school youth in the parish. The music and youth-friendly homilies aim to speak to the heart of young people, making the Mass more interesting and relevant to their daily lives. The Youth Mass also promotes youth involvement in all liturgical ministries. One sees mostly youth greeters, lectors, ushers, gift bearers, musicians and extraordinary ministers of the Holy Eucharist. Candidates are required to attend the Youth Mass as part of every Confirmation session, sitting in the front center pews or with their family members in the front third of the church.

4. Catechetical Sessions & Participation at Youth Mass (Mandatory attendance once a month)

- Year 1 candidates meet once each month on the second or third Saturday, 4:00 p.m. – 6:30 p.m. (includes Youth Mass). In place of a session on January 18, 2014, Y1 candidates will attend a Youth Rally for Life at the Cathedral.
- Year 2 candidates meet monthly on the first Saturday of each month (except in January when they meet on January 11), 4:00 p.m. – 6:30 p.m. (includes Youth Mass).

4. Catechetical Sessions & Participation at Youth Mass (Mandatory attendance once a month)

Attendance is taken at both sessions and Mass. If a candidate is unable to attend a session and/or Mass, his/her parent needs to send an email or text to Theresa Costanzo at least one hour before session begins. Candidates are allowed up to three absences provided that they attend an additional Youth Nite for each absence. If a candidate is unable to attend Youth Nite as a make-up, his/her parent needs to contact Theresa for alternative make-up options.

5. Youth Nites (4 minimum required per year)

“Youth Nites” are social and interactive youth ministry gatherings that provide teens a safe and youth-friendly environment to build community, address various issues/challenges teenagers face in their daily lives, and develop a deeper relationship with Christ through communal prayer experiences. In general, Youth Nites occur twice a month (except during holiday breaks), on the second (2nd) and fourth (4th) Wednesdays, 7:00 – 8:30 p.m. in O’Malley Hall. Confirmation candidates need to attend a minimum of four “Youth Nites” each year (2 in the Summer/Fall seasons, 2 in the Winter/Spring seasons).

6. Parish Participation (7 hrs. minimum per year)

One of the goals of Confirmation preparation program is to awaken (in the teens) a sense of belonging to the church, mainly through St. Rita’s faith community. Hence, candidates have numerous opportunities to participate or serve in the youth ministries and in other parish ministries. Parish participation/service opportunities include the following:

- Participate at Youth Ministry activities (Youth Nites, Youth Day, or other activities (see youth ministry section).
- Be a lector, usher, gift bearer, singer, altar server, and/or musician at the Youth Mass.
- Be a small group leader for Edge Middle School Ministry (Mondays, 4:00 – 5:15 p.m.).
- Help serve and bus tables at Men’s Club Pancake Breakfast and/or Spaghetti Dinner
- Help with other parish ministries and/or events such as the Ministry Fair (9/28 and 9/29/13), St. Rita’s Feast Day, etc..

7. Serving Those in Need – Corporal Works of Mercy (1 Service project done with one’s parent and/or sponsor)

“The [corporal] works of mercy are charitable actions by which we come to the aid of our neighbor in his bodily necessities.” (CCC #2247). In Matthew 25, Jesus commands his followers to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, shelter the homeless, visit the sick and those in prison, and bury the dead.”

The Youth Ministry organizes various service projects during the year (see Year 1 or Year 2 Confirmation Schedule). Each Confirmation candidate needs to sign up for at least one service project and serve with his/her parent and/or sponsor.

8. Retreats (one per year)

The Year 2 weekend retreat will be on April 4—6, 2014 at Camp Buckhorn, Idyllwild. A spiritual retreat has been proven to be the single most powerful way to evangelize our youth today. At the Year 2 weekend retreat, members of our core team

8. Retreats (one per year)

including peer leaders share their personal faith stories of how God has changed and/or worked in their lives. Real stories by real people whom the youth have gotten to know and trust in our faith community are powerful ways to evangelize our youth. In return, our youth are encouraged to acknowledge and share their own stories of how God is present in their lives to others.

Year 1 all-day retreat will be on Saturday, March 1, 2014, 9:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. at St. Rita parish.

The National Evangelization Team (NET) Ministries will facilitate this retreat. NET Ministries is very effective with retreats because they focus on recruiting, training, and forming teams of young adult volunteers from all over the country who spend a year committed to traveling from parish to parish, conducting youth retreats. The young adult disciples are wonderful witnesses of the Catholic faith for our teenagers.

Make-Up Retreat policy: Any candidate who misses a St. Rita Confirmation retreat would need to attend a make-up Confirmation retreat at another Catholic parish. The candidate is responsible for requesting that the respective Confirmation coordinator sends a letter or email to Theresa Costanzo by May 1, 2014, confirming that he/she has attended the make-up retreat. Those who do not meet the retreat requirement are not considered ready to receive the sacrament of Confirmation.

9. Confirmation Name Assignment (due by January 11, 2014 at the Year 2 session with sponsors)

The use of one's baptismal name is ideal, since it better expresses the relationship between Baptism and Confirmation. If a special Confirmation name is taken, it must be the name of a recognized saint or an acceptable recognized Christian name (such as Faith, Grace, Charity, Prudence).

10. Letter to the pastor and bishop

At the end of the Confirmation preparation process during the weekend retreat, Year 2 candidates are asked to write a letter to the pastor and bishop, stating the reasons why he/she wants to receive the sacrament of Confirmation and expressing how he/she is ready to be fully initiated into the Catholic Church.

11. Parent Participation

Y2 parents are invited to participate in a session with their son/daughter on Saturday, October 5, 2013 on Catholic social teaching. There will also be a Y2 parent meeting on Wednesday, February 26, 2014 at 7 p.m. in Gara Hall.

Both Y1 and Y2 parents need to do at least one service project with his/her teenager. Sign ups are available at the parent/candidate orientation and at every Confirmation session. Parent may sign up via email.

We welcome parent support and participation in the Confirmation preparation process. Please contact Theresa Costanzo at ym@st-rita.org if you want to help in the following areas:

- Administrative /office work
- Chaperone for an off-site event
- Help organize a potluck or pizza night after a Youth Mass
- Help organize or work at fundraisers
- Coordinate lunch/snacks for the year 1 retreat
- Chaperone at the Year 2 weekend retreat
- Produce flyers for events
- Provide snacks/drinks at a Confirmation session

12. Sponsor Participation

Year 1 candidates need to select a Confirmation sponsor and submit their sponsor Form by the Session with Sponsors on Saturday, November 9, 2013 at 4:00 p.m. After Mass, both candidates and sponsors will participate in a “Ritual of Promise” at the 5:30 Youth Mass. Family members are encouraged to attend Mass to witness the ritual and show support for the candidates.

Sponsors of Year 2 candidates are expected to attend a session with their candidates on Saturday, January 11, 2014 at 4:00 p.m., followed by participation in a “Commitment to the Journey” ritual at the Youth Mass. Family members are encouraged to attend Mass to witness the ritual and show support for the candidates. Year 2 Sponsors are also expected to attend the Confirmation rehearsal and Confirmation Rite (date to be determined) during the Easter season.

Program Policies

Absences

Attendance is recorded at sessions. Regular and consistent attendance is very important to ensure that our teens get the most out of Edge Ministry or Confirmation Program . Parents will be contacted by the Director of Youth Ministry should there be an attendance concern with their teen. If your child will be missing a session or event, please email Theresa Costanzo in advance at ym@st-rita.org to notify her.

Tardies, Early Departures, Late Pick-Ups

Tardies and early departures should be kept to a minimum. As you can imagine, students entering a class late or leaving early can be very disruptive to the other students in the class. **If your teenager must leave early, please check in with Theresa Costanzo before signing out your teen. Confirmation candidates are expected to be inside the church by 5:30 p.m. for Mass after each Confirmation session. Minors will not be dismissed to wait for parents in the parking lot during Mass (between 5:30 and 6:30 p.m.)** Late Pick-ups: If you are late in picking up your son/daughter, please call Theresa Costanzo at (626) 590-8828.

Discipline

Disruptive behavior from students will not be tolerated. After a warning from the catechist, and if there is no improvement, students who are disruptive will be sent to the Director of Youth Ministry, and parents will be notified. If the behavior continues, a conference will be held between the Director of Youth Ministry, parents and student to determine the cause of the problem, possible solutions and appropriate action.

Damage to Property and Facilities

Each student is responsible for respecting parish property and facilities. If damage occurs, parents/guardians will be held responsible.

Emergencies

In the event of an earthquake or other emergency, students will be evacuated to the church parking lot. Minors will only be released to a parent/guardian or persons indicated on the emergency-earthquake form filled out at the time of registration. If you would like to add additional people to the list of those who can pick up your teenager(s), please contact our office.

Permission Slips Required for Off-Site Events

Any participation at off-site event(s) organized by the Youth Ministry/Confirmation Program (e.g. Youth Day, Retreat) will require signed permission slips. Please send an email to ym@st-rita.org to request a permission slip.

Expectations

The St. Rita Youth Ministry has the following expectations of parents, youth participants, catechists and peer leaders:

We ask that our parents:

- be Christian role models for their children;
- attend and actively participate at Mass regularly;
- encourage their teens to keep an open mind and positive attitude;
- be respectful of others in the program;
- read, sign and comply with the guidelines set forth in this handbook;
- communicate with the Director of Youth Ministry should issues/concerns arise.

We ask that our Confirmation candidates and Edge participants:

- attend and actively participate at Mass regularly;
- attend and actively participate at sessions;
- keep an open mind and positive attitude;
- respect the adults, peer leaders, and other participants in the program;
- dress modestly when attending sessions and Mass;
- read, sign and follow the guidelines set forth in this handbook;
- communicate with the Director of Youth Ministry should issues/concerns arise.

As catechists, our volunteers are to:

- attend and actively participate at Mass regularly;
- be a Christian role model in words and actions;
- attend Confirmation Specialization training provided by the Archdiocese of Los Angeles;
- be fingerprinted and submit to a background check by the Archdiocese of Los Angeles;
- attend the VIRTUS training for adults provided by the Archdiocese of Los Angeles;
- sign and comply with the Code of Conduct outlined on the “Acknowledgement of Adults Interacting with Minors” form;
- be prepared and prompt for each session;
- provide a positive and faith-filled environment for the faith development of our teens;
- communicate with the Director of Youth Ministry should any issues/concerns arise.

As peer leaders, our youth volunteers are to:

- attend and actively participate at Mass regularly;
- attend at least one “peer leader” training and planning meetings;
- read, sign and comply with the Code of Conduct outlined on the “Acknowledgement of Minors Interacting with Minors” form;
- be a Christian peer role model in words and actions;
- be prepared and prompt for each session;
- Communicate with the Director of Youth Ministry if they are late or absent;
- Communicate with the Director of Youth Ministry should issues/concerns arise.

Program Expectations

This is to acknowledge that we have received the St. Rita Youth Ministry/Confirmation Handbook. We understand and agree to cooperate with the Confirmation program requirements and polices set forth in the handbook.

We will contact the Director of Youth Ministry/Confirmation Coordinator should we have any concerns or questions.

_____ Youth's Name	_____ Youth's Signature	_____ Date
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_____ Youth's Name	_____ Youth's Signature	_____ Date
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_____ Parent's/Guardian's Name	_____ Parent's/Guardian's Signature	_____ Date
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_____ Parent's/Guardian's Name	_____ Parent's/Guardian's Signature	_____ Date
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Please sign and return to Theresa Costanzo at the end of the Confirmation Year 1 Orientation, Confirmation Year 2 Session with Parents, or drop off at the Parish Office by October 15, 2013.

Family Acknowledgment